

Foster mom retires and shares 35 years of advice

In more than 35 years of foster care, Carol Loy has worked with well over 190 foster children in her home for respite, short-term and long-term placements. She focused on teenagers and adopted a foster child as her daughter. After her husband's passing, Loy continued caring for youth, leaning on her extended family for additional support. After a long career, she has recently decided to retire from foster care. Loy often shares her perspective on foster parenting with new caregivers during trainings and offers four important suggestions.



Carol Loy

Build a long-term relationship

When a new foster child came into the Loy home, she always told them she was not there to be their friend as much as she was to be their parent. However, as it turned out, they became friends with some relationships lasting a lifetime. One advantage was that she had her extended family that readily accepted her foster children and included them in family and holiday gatherings. Carol still has contact with many of her former

foster children and even from some of their own children.

Accept youth as they are

When Carol started as a foster parent she thought, "I'm going to save the world." She said she would dress the foster children up

to return home and for when they would become adults themselves.

Be consistent and don't give up

"Never give up on a foster child, no matter what they do or how they behave. If you don't love and bond with the foster child, it's the foster child who suffers. You have to do fostering with a heart and not to just make money." Loy admits that foster care can be very hard, but she encourages foster parents to be patient with the children. "Don't quit too soon," she said.

Work as part of a team

Loy found success when she could work with and stay in close contact with the child's caseworker and other members of the professional team. "The team included my foster parent support specialists and other foster parents," she said.

I don't consider myself anyone special. Really, I'm the one who was blessed with these kids. They are the ones who put a lot into my life."

-Carol Loy

to make them look cute and presentable. She soon realized that what they looked like was not so important. What they really needed was to be accepted by her, just the way they were. Then she started working at preparing them

"People have told me I should write a book. I really did nothing more than what was expected of me. I don't consider myself anyone special. Really, I'm the one who was blessed with these kids. They are the ones who put a lot into my life," she concluded.

Local Area Networks can help with problems at school

Child and Adolescent Local Area Networks (LANs) are a group of agencies, organizations, community members and individuals within a set geographic area joining together to respond to the express needs of citizens within the community. This newsletter feature will regularly focus on one of the 15 LANs in Central region.

Last year, the service contracts focused on creating programs to stabilize children in their current educational settings. These programs are available to all families, including foster, adoptive and guardianship parents concerned about students at risk of truancy, suspension or expulsion.

LAN 15 includes Sangamon, Logan, Mason, Menard, and Christian Counties. Sangamon County has the largest population of school-aged children, with 17,000 students enrolled in District #186 schools in Springfield alone, according to the Regional Office of Education. However, that doesn't mean that the other four counties don't have a significant population of students whose academic performance is at risk. Darrell Sisk, a Truant Officer covering Logan, Mason and Menard counties stated there were over 400 truancy cases in the three LAN 15 counties he covers.

Havana Area Prevention, Inc.'s Family program called Supporting Education in LAN 15 (SEL-15) along with Rural Family Services geographical coverage includes

Logan, Mason, and Menard counties. Because of a working agreement that LAN 15 has with truant officers in the Regional Office of Education at-risk students are easily identified. They get enrolled in the SEL-15 program before they have to experience any further episodes of interruption of their school progress through disciplines of truanancies, suspensions, or expulsions. John Glick of Havana Area Prevention can be reached at 309-543-3381 or Rory Stoller of Rural Family Services can be reached at 217-899-3352.

In Springfield, there are two programs that assist the schools in stabilizing educationally at-risk students. First, the Parent Help Line of St. John's Hospital's program is called Parents As Mentors: Coaching for Success, which teaches parents how to be educationally involved with their students. This program also addresses the students' behaviors that cause them to be in the educationally at-risk category.

A lot of the learning takes place during monthly group meetings with the families receiving services. After dinner together, speakers will cover various topics including special education rights and even anger management.

"We also have staff to help build more positive communication between the schools and parents. That can lead to better outcomes," said Stacey Boll.

Caregivers can call 217-494-2431 for more information.

The second program, run by Rutledge Youth Foundation, is called Achieving Academic Success. This program covers Sangamon and Christian County. Rural Family Services provides staff in Christian County to offer the direct services. The program consists of individualized advocacy with a tutoring-mentoring component. The contact person is Pete Norell at 217/525-7757.

All four programs in the five counties of LAN 15 proved to be over 90 percent successful in keeping the at-risk population in schools from truanancies, suspensions or expulsions.

Central Connections

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Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.

More options for buying youth eyeglasses closer to home

Children and youth in care who need prescription glasses just got a few more options. The Department of Healthcare and Family Services (formerly Public Aid) will continue its eyeglass program. However, outside of Cook County it can be difficult to find a provider enrolled in the DHFS program within 30 miles of where the family lives. Now, under the Downstate Vision Care Program, DCFS will ensure that eyeglasses are more readily available to children and youth. In Central Region, DCFS now has a formal agreement with Wal-Mart, Sam's Club and Bard Optical to provide eyeglasses to children and youth under DCFS care (foster care, independent living or residential programs). Frames and prescription single vision polycarbonate lenses may be obtained up to a maximum of \$60 at Wal-Mart and Bard Optical. Costs at Sam's Club may be

somewhat higher, and DCFS will assist by paying up to a maximum of \$60. Stores in the DCFS Central Region cities listed below are participating providers.

Caseworkers will still need to request authorization before caregivers can go to purchase glasses. Caregivers must tell their caseworkers the name and address of the vision care provider they want to use. As part of the request, caseworkers must provide a copy of the eyeglass prescription and certify that:

- There is not a DHFS provider within 30 miles to fill the eyeglass subscription.
- The caregiver has been told he or she will be responsible for any costs exceeding \$60.
- If the caregiver uses a non-participating vendor, the caregiver has been told he or she will pay out-of-pocket and be

reimbursed for an amount not to exceed \$60.

Once a request is authorized, foster parents can take the eyeglass prescription, the purchase authorization form and any additional forms provided by the caseworker to their chosen vendor. Foster parents must still use the DHFS providers for eye exams. The DHFS provider also remains the first option for the eyeglasses. However, if distance is prohibitive (more than 30 miles) caregivers now have other choices. Contact the child's caseworker for more details on the Downstate Vision Care Program, see Policy Guide 2006.06 or call the DCFS Office of Health Services at 217-557-2689. Updates on new participating providers will be included in future newsletters as they are added.

Bloomington	Bard Optical and Wal-Mart	Lincoln	Bard Optical	Peoria	Sam's Club and Wal-Mart (at 8915 N. Allen and 3315 N. University)
Canton	Bard Optical	Macomb	Wal-Mart		
Champaign	Bard Optical, Sam's Club and Wal-Mart	Mattoon	Wal-Mart	Pittsfield	Wal-Mart
Charleston	Wal-Mart	Moline	Wal-Mart	Princeton	Wal-Mart
Danville	Wal-Mart	Morton	Wal-Mart	Quincy	Wal-Mart
Decatur	Bard Optical and Wal-Mart (at 4625 E. Maryland and 4224 N. Prospect)	Normal	Sam's Club and Wal-Mart	Rock Island	Bard Optical
East Peoria	Bard Optical and Wal-Mart	Ottawa	Wal-Mart	Savoy	Wal-Mart
Forsyth	Bard Optical	Paris	Wal-Mart	Springfield	Bard Optical, Sam's Club, Wal-Mart (at 2760 N. Dirksen & 3401 Freedom Dr.)
Galesburg	Bard Optical	Pekin	Bard Optical and Wal-Mart		
Jerseyville	Wal-Mart	Peoria	Bard Optical (at 4620 N. University, 1200 W. Main, 7720 N. Crestline and 7715 N. Grand Prairie)	Taylorville	Wal-Mart
				Urbana	Wal-Mart
				Washington	Bard Optical and Wal-Mart

Central Region Training Calendar

Foster PRIDE In-Service Modules

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend PRIDE In-Service Training. Licensing and child welfare staff are invited to attend the training if they inform the college of their attendance a week prior to the training.

Call the DCFS Office of Training to Register • 877-800-3393

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk*

(Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Champaign **Restoration Ministries**
May 1, 8, 15 & 22 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.
(Tue)

Module 4 - *The Sexual Development of Children and Responding to Child Sexual Abuse*

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Springfield **Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church**
April 23 & 30, 6:30 - 9:30 p.m.
May 7 (Mon)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member*

(Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Peoria **Lutheran Social Services**
April 17 & 24, 6 - 9 p.m.
May 1 (Tue)

On-line course for Child and Family Team Meetings

The DCFS Office of Training has blended technology with training to offer the first on-line course for foster parents, "Child and Family Team Meetings for Foster Caregivers." Foster parents can earn three hours of training credits as they learn about the role caregivers play during the meetings as one of the team members working toward reunification and other permanency options.

Foster parents can take this course using a computer in their home. An instructor will open the course and remain available through the end of the class while participants work through the course from home. Foster parents without computers at home or with dial-up connections can choose to attend one of two on-site sessions at DCFS computer labs.

Monday, April 16	6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Thursday, April 26	6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Wednesday, May 9	6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Saturday, May 19	12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Monday, May 21	8:45 a.m. - Noon
Friday, June 1	6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
Tuesday, June 12*	12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.
(Computer LAB Class, DCFS, 227 So. 7 th , Springfield)	
Saturday, June 23	8:45 a.m. - Noon

To register for the foster parent on-line training, caregivers may contact the DCFS registration unit at 877-800-3393.

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

**Call the DCFS Office of Training to Register
877-800-3393**

Danville **Community Church of God**
April 24 & May 1 (Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Peoria **Children's Home**
April 25 & May 2 (Wed) 6-9 p.m.
June 11 & 13 (Mon & Wed) 6-9 p.m.

Springfield **Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church**
April 9 & 16 (Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

West Peoria **Lutheran Social Svcs. of Illinois**
June 11 & 18 (Mon) 6-9 p.m.

Correction:

Some Central Region households received the last issue of the newsletter and other DCFS mail addressed with the wrong first and last name. This was an isolated occurrence and has already been corrected. I apologize for any confusion this may have caused.
Vanessa James, Editor